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CHANGING THE PEACETIME DEPLOYMENT OF AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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NEW STRATEGIES AND MISSIONS ARE COMBINING WITH DECLINING DEFENSE BUDGETS TO FORCE NEW ASSESSMENTS OF HOW WE USE OUR AIRCRAFT CARRIERS DURING PEACETIME. THE SENATE HAS ASKED THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR A REPORT ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE FORWARD PRESENCE PROVIDED BY OUR CARRIERS. THIS PAPER IS AN UNSOLICITED RESPONSE TO THAT REQUEST AND DEALS WITH BOTH THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF FORWARD DEPLOYED TIME OF THESE CAPITAL SHIPS. VIABLE OPTIONS FOR INCREASING ON-STATION TIME INCLUDE DEPLOYMENT CYCLE ADJUSTMENTS AND MULTIPLE CREWING SCHEMES, WHILE HOMEPORTING CHANGES HOLD LITTLE PROMISE. THE COMPOSITION OF THE SHIPS AND CREWS THAT FORM THE CARRIER BATTLE GROUP NEEDS TO REFLECT THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF PEACEFUL, NON-TRADITIONAL MISSIONS. CARRIERS SHOULD BE MORE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN ESTABLISHING CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES AND AIDING THEIR DEVELOPMENT.

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Abstract of
CHANGING THE PEACETIME DEPLOYMENT
OF AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

New strategies and missions are combining with declining defense budgets to force new assessments of how we use our aircraft carriers during peacetime. The Senate has asked the Secretary of Defense for a report on how to improve the forward presence provided by our carriers. This paper is an unsolicited response to that request and deals with both the quantity and quality of forward deployed time of these capital ships. Viable options for increasing on-station time include deployment cycle adjustments and multiple crewing schemes, while homeporting changes hold little promise. The composition of the ships and crews that form the carrier battle group needs to reflect the growing importance of peaceful, non-traditional missions. Carriers should be more actively involved in establishing close relationships with Third World countries and aiding their development.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

New strategies and missions combine with expected force level reductions to demand new peacetime deployment patterns and utilizations for our aircraft carriers. While some small steps have recently been taken in restructuring carrier battle group (CVBG) deployments, optimizing our diminishing assets requires more radical changes in deployment cycles, CVBG composition, stationing, and employment.

A further reduction below the Base Force's 12 deployable carriers is nearly inevitable under the new Administration. Traditional force planning approaches are meaningless in the face of a free-falling defense budget. The CINCs and the Navy must simply commit to getting the best quantity and quality of use out of the carriers in commission at any given time. Their success at enhancing the efficiency and efficacy of the aircraft carrier in meeting today's strategy needs may well determine where Congress will hold the line on cutting carriers.

The Senate already voted to delay funding of the next carrier, CVN-76, until the Secretary of Defense submits a report on alternatives that would "... permit the Navy to maintain a higher level of forward presence with current forces."[1] It is to the topic of that directed report that this paper is

addressed. If the carrier can not adapt, it may well become a dinosaur destined for extinction.

This paper will briefly review the implications for aircraft carriers of both our shift to an interest-based strategy and our changing force structure. With a strong case to be made for continued forward deployment by our carriers, options for improving their efficiency in providing presence will be examined. Finally, changes in the composition and peacetime employment of carrier battle groups will be proposed to better satisfy new roles and missions.

CHAPTER II

FACTORS DRIVING CHANGE

THE NEW FORWARD PRESENCE

Our military no longer faces a unified global threat. The shift to a multipolar world, with its emphasis on coalition warfare and regional focus, dictates reductions in our forward stationed combat forces in Europe and elsewhere. But as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff says in his recent, highly publicized report on roles and missions, "... as forward stationing decreases, forward presence operations will increase in importance."[2] Meeting that challenge falls heavily on the shoulders of naval forces.

Continued naval presence complements our interest-based strategy goals of regional stability, collective security, military interoperability, deterrence of hegemony, economic freedom and growth, and goodwill. Traditional missions such as combined exercises, security assistance, military-to-military contacts, and port visits assume heightened importance. Non-traditional missions such as humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, nation building, counterterrorism, and counternarcotics vault to the forefront as well. Our carrier battle groups must be equipped and trained for these purposes.

Many naval officers seem traditionally bound to viewing the aircraft carrier only as a warfighting machine. The corollary of this self-imposed limitation is an advocacy for keeping the

carriers more closely tied to home waters in order to maintain surge capability when a major crisis arises.[3] This approach misses the point of being positively engaged to prevent the crisis in the first place. A stable, prospering friend of America with a professional, apolitical military will not suffer an upheaval requiring us to evacuate our embassy under fire.

FORCE STRUCTURE

A new strategy focus is not the only catalyst for changing how we employ our carrier battle groups. In addition to shifting strategy and the inevitable force level reductions mentioned earlier, the force structure of our Navy has changed over the years, too. Technology as well as policy is having an impact.

Among the carriers themselves, the growing predominance of nuclear propulsion is important. Seven CVNs are in commission and two more are under construction. They provide significant advantages in transit speed and sustainability over conventional CVs, allowing more flexibility in their employment. Even petroleum-powered supporting combatants have improved capabilities. For example, the Aegis equipped cruisers (and now destroyers as well) are vastly superior AAW platforms compared to the older CGs.

Standardization is another critical factor. The six Nimitz Class carriers are similarly outfitted and their crews similarly trained. Detailed procedures standardize their internal

functions in all major areas such as engineering, aircraft maintenance, and flight deck operations. Supporting surface combatants enjoy similar standardization. This interchangeability allows the possibility of non-traditional crewing schemes.

On the policy side, the removal of nuclear weapons from our ships opens the door for port visits to previously reluctant countries. Other countries which desired to remain "nonaligned" in a bipolar world are also beginning to welcome our ships for exercises or visits.

All these factors demand that we now begin, without encumbrance from the past, a new look at when, where, and how to use aircraft carriers to support our national security interests.

CHAPTER III

DEPLOYMENT PATTERNS

Accepting that aircraft carrier forward presence is a desirable policy, maximizing that presence in the face of declining numbers of ships is a worthy goal. A number of options exist for increasing forward deployed availability of the carriers, such as deployment cycle adjustments, East Coast or foreign homeporting, and multiple crewing. In this chapter, each option will be considered in turn and separate from the issue of how to use the carriers once they are overseas. The question here is not "how", but "how often".

DEPLOYMENT CYCLE ADJUSTMENTS

The first and most obvious option is to change the carrier deployment cycle. The current cycle for ships without an overhaul due is a 6 month cruise followed by a 14 month turnaround for upkeep, independent training, aircrew carrier qualification (CQ) support, and workups for the next cruise. Underway for a total of 4 to 5 months during the turnaround, the carrier thus maintains an operational tempo (OPTEMPO) of 50-55% over the 20 month cycle.[4] OPTEMPO (or PERSTEMPO when talking about the crew) is rightly held up as a sacred cow by naval leaders because increases in OPTEMPO historically lead to lower personnel retention and ultimately to lower readiness.

Any cycle adjustments should protect that overall OPTEMPO. Three inputs determine the cycle: cruise length, turnaround length, and time at sea during the turnaround. Fixing OPTEMPO at 50% means that only two of the three inputs can be independently adjusted before the third time factor automatically follows. In other words, cruise length cannot be simply extended unless the turnaround is lengthened or the time at sea during the turnaround is reduced. Table I lists a range of various cycle structures which meet a 50% OPTEMPO standard.

TABLE I -- Deployment Cycle Structures With 50% OPTEMPO

Option	Cruise Length (mos)	Turn-around Length (mos)	At-Sea On TA (mos)	% Time De-ployed	% Time On-Sta (15 day transt)	% Time On-Sta (30 day transt)
Current	6	14	4	30.0%	25.0%	20.0%
A	6	12	3	33.3%	27.8%	22.2%
B	6	10	2	37.5%	31.3%	25.0%
C	7	15	4	31.8%	27.3%	22.7%
D	7	13	3	35.0%	30.0%	25.0%
E	8	18	5	30.8%	26.9%	19.2%
F	8	16	4	33.3%	29.2%	25.0%
G	8	14	3	36.4%	31.8%	27.3%

The important measure for forward presence, however, is on-station time. This is the cruise length minus the transit time required to get from the homeport to the area of interest and back. This varies from about 15 days each way for a LANTFLT ship stationed in the eastern Mediterranean to 30 days for a

PACFLT carrier assigned to the Indian Ocean. Such a measure places a bonus on extending deployments. For example, a 6 month cruise to the Indian Ocean nets only 4 months on-station, but a 33% increase in cruise length to 8 months gains a full 50% in on-station time (6 months vice 4 months). Note the effect of the different deployment cycle structures in Table I with regard to on-station times.

Options D and F offer the most realistic choices. The former simply trades a month of workups for extra month of cruise. Many spouses have long advocated this cycle with, "Why don't you just go on cruise and get it over with instead of coming in and out so much beforehand!" Of course the disadvantage lies in somewhat decreased readiness as the cruise begins. This could be quickly made up with a continued emphasis on training early in the deployment, though. Furthermore, the full availability of the USS Forrestal (CV-59) as the training carrier beginning in 1994, with its significant advantages over the USS Lexington (AVT-17)*, should gain back at least a week or two of CQ time for Fleet carriers each turnaround which can be applied against the proposed 4 week reduction in workups.

Option F merely extends the deployment and the turnaround by 2 months each. Some may consider an 8 month cruise simply

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* Unlike the USS Lexington (AVT-17), the USS Forrestal (CV-59) is F-14 capable. It can also accomplish limited launching from Catapult #2 during CQ, has greater deck space for refueling and catapult waiting lines, and has waist catapults for faster covey launches. All these factors make it much more efficient for Fleet Readiness Squadron CQ support.

too long for morale to weather. However, the 24 month cycle would be popular among the many enlisted ratings with 42 to 60 month sea duty rotations, who frequently have to make three cruises per tour but would usually make only two under the new plan.

Both options, however, have the crucial plus of significantly increased on-station time percentage per carrier. Even after factoring in periodic overhaul requirements, a 10 carrier fleet using a new cycle could roughly meet the on-station commitments of the Base Force's 12 carrier fleet using the current deployment cycle structure. One of the new cycles should be adopted immediately.

EAST COAST HOMEPORTING EMPHASIS

Another method for increasing on-station time is by decreasing transit times through a change in the homeport of one or more carriers. The scheme here is to increase the percentage of Atlantic Fleet based ships and support forward presence in the Indian Ocean almost exclusively from there.[5] This would take advantage of a roughly 10 day savings of transit time in reaching the Persian Gulf from the East Coast via the Suez Canal as compared to the transit from a West Coast port.

Assuming an expected 10 carrier homeporting plan of 5 East, 4 West, and 1 Japan (5/4/1), a shift to a 7/2/1 mix would generate an extra 6 weeks of on-station time per 20 month deployment cycle. However, this equates to only an extra 1/4 of

a carrier in terms of generating on-station presence. Against this minor improvement stands the specter of a Middle East crisis in which the Suez Canal is closed or unsafe for passage, and our carriers are stuck on the wrong side. Heavier shifts than the 7/2/1 mix would never pass the criterion of supporting our Pacific interests. This scheme should be dropped from consideration.

FOREIGN HOMEPORTING

Transit time can be eliminated completely if a carrier is simply homeported in the area of desired presence. To some extent that is the case with the USS Independence (CV-62) stationed in Yokosuka, Japan, though even that ship makes regular deployments to the Indian Ocean.

The notion of a Mediterranean homeport is similarly attractive. Twenty years ago the Navy was forging ahead with plans to base the Independence in Greece when a coup in that country scrubbed the idea.[6] Resurrecting such a plan today is highly unlikely, though. Finding a host nation that would not place unacceptable restrictions and prior restraints on usage of the carrier is doubtful.[b] The littoral Mediterranean countries have complex and delicate diplomatic relations with other states in the region that would probably preclude allowing such a U.S.

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[b] Even Italy, the most frequently mentioned prospective host, displayed its jurisdictional sensitivity in a faceoff with U.S. forces after the forcing down of the Achille Lauro hijackers at the U.S. base in Sigonella.

presence.[7] One exception might be Israel, but that proposal would be met with a world outcry which could not be politically overcome.

Even if a host were found, that country would certainly not pay to support the carrier in the same fashion as Japan, an added feature which keeps the Yokosuka homeport solidly attractive. The specter of sudden eviction by a Mediterranean host is also a negative to consider. In all, little promise exists for expanding our foreign homeporting arrangements.

MULTIPLE CREWING

Ballistic missile submarines have long operated with two complete crews. A boat patrols with a Blue Crew, returns to homeport for a turnover with the Gold Crew, and then the Blue Crew takes leave and trains in schools and simulators until the Gold Crew returns. Could some variant of this multiple crewing system work for an aircraft carrier and its air wing? If one could, it would hold the promise of huge increases in on-station time per carrier.[8] Two basic options come to mind: a crew swapout at homeport akin to the SSBNs, or a swapout on-station. Each will have to carefully account for issues of training, readiness, logistics, ship-life, and overhaul requirements.

From the outset it must be recognized that no suitable simulation exists for flight deck operations. Some period of workup on a real aircraft carrier is mandatory for the safety and readiness of aircrew, maintenance crews, and flight deck

crews. In addition, pilots have to keep flying while ashore to maintain some degree of proficiency. With that in mind, we can explore the options more fully.

Swapout at Homeport. A straight Blue/Gold crewing, with two crews and two air wings per ship, might have a cycle schedule like this: 6 month Blue cruise, 2 months of restricted availability and turnover, 2 months of workups and CQ support, 1 month preparation period, and then 6 month Gold cruise. Table II summarizes the tempos and on-station percentages for this cycle.

Table II - Blue/Gold Crew Swapout at Homeport

Option	Ship OPTEMPO	Crew PERS-TEMPO	% Time De-ployed	% Time On-Sta (15 day transt)	% Time On-Sta (30 day transt)
Current	50.0%	50.0%	30.0%	25.0%	20.0%
Blue/Gold	72.7%	36.4%	54.5%	45.4%	36.4%

In effect, before ship-life and overhaul considerations, it would take 4 carriers and 8 crews/air wings to give the same on-station time as 7 carriers with 7 crews/air wings do now. With more frequent overhauls due to the increased at-sea time, the comparison becomes more like 5/8 to get the effect of 7/7. Add in the cost of acquiring a replacement carrier more often due to shorter ship-life and the advantage just about disappears completely. Further disadvantages include the inefficient personnel use with the low PERSTEMPO (36.4%) and the lack of

major savings in airframe acquisition. In other words, such a plan is stillborn.

However, the standardization enjoyed with a future carrier fleet composed almost entirely of Nimitz class ships[9] permits another version of the homeport swapout concept. Figure 1 depicts a sliding deployment schedule in which 3 carriers and 5 crews/air wings rotate cruises while 1 additional carrier with a permanent skeleton crew provides the workup and CQ support platform.

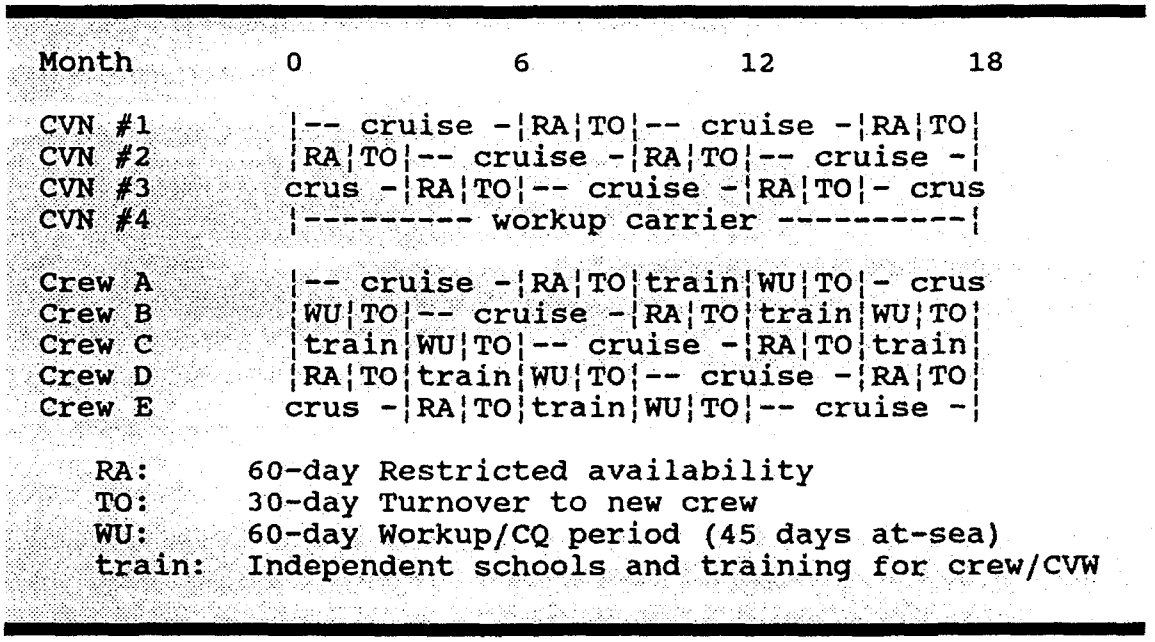

FIGURE 1 -- Sliding Homeport Swapout Schedule

Table III lists the average tempos for this scheme. The workup carrier would have to be rotated every few years to even out ship-life for all carriers.

Table III - Sliding Crew Swapout at Homeport

Option	Ship OPTEMPO (average of 4 CV)	Crew PERS-TEMPO	% Time De-ployed (ave)	% Time On-Sta (15 day transt)	% Time On-Sta (30 day transt)
Current	50.0%	50.0%	30.0%	25.0%	20.0%
Blue/Gold	72.7%	36.4%	54.5%	45.4%	36.4%
Sliding HP	62.5%	50.0%	50.0%	41.7%	33.3%

This sliding schedule provides the on-station time of 7 carriers and 7 crews/air wings on current cycles with just 4 carriers, 5.2 crews, and 5 air wings. With ship OPTEMPO just 25% higher than under current cycles, even after taking into account overhaul and ship-life adjustments, it still leaves a sizable improvement in required resource levels. A notional 8-carrier, 10 ship crews and 9 air wing Navy could actually provide as much forward presence as a conventionally deployed 12 carrier and 11 air wing fleet for no increase in individual PERSTEMPO.

Swapout On-Station. The same sliding concept could even be applied to a swapout of personnel on-station. Much transit time could be avoided completely as a new crew takes custody of everything from the ship itself to the airplanes, support equipment, and tools. Only personal gear and bodies would be involved in the airlift to a forward port such as Diego Garcia or Naples. Figure 2 lines out the schedule for this scheme. A triple cruise would be the limit for each ship due to upkeep

requirements. Carriers would observe a 32 month cycle consisting of a 17 month deployment and a 15 month mix of upkeep and workups/CQ (6 months of which would be at sea). Crews and air wings would haye a 16 month cycle with a cruise, 7 months of leave and training, and 3 months of workups/CQ (2 months of which would be at sea).

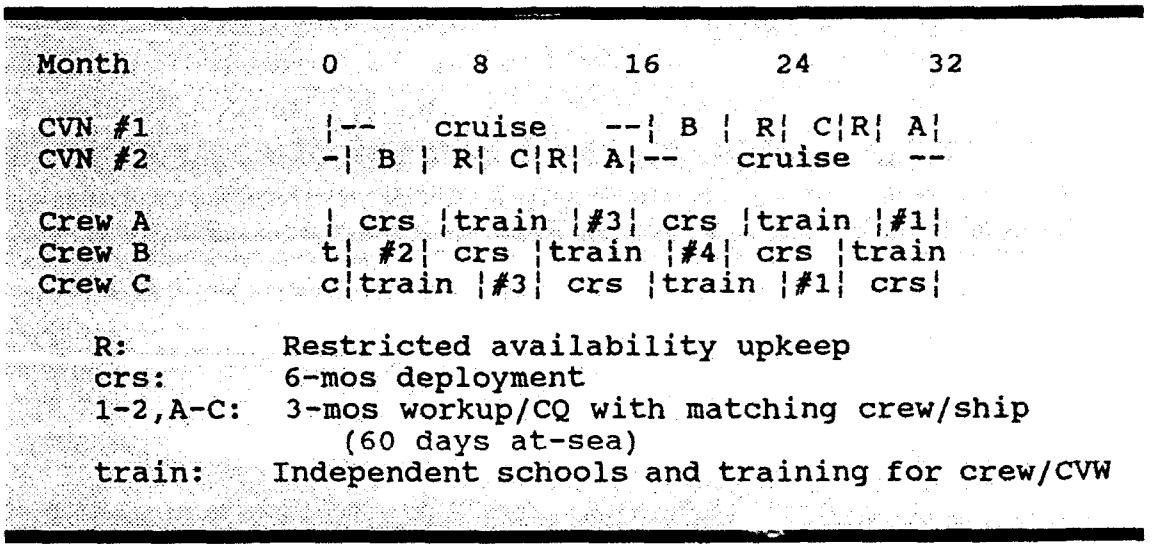

FIGURE 2 -- Sliding On-Station Swapout Schedule

Table IV presents the tempos for this plan. Note the twofold increases in on-station percentages, even when subtracting the two week on-station turnover periods as "non-available" time.

Table IV - Sliding Crew Swapout On-Station

Option	Ship OPTEMPO	Crew PERS-TEMPO	% Time De-ployed	% Time On-Sta (15 day transt)	% Time On-Sta (30 day transt)
Current	50.0%	50.0%	30.0%	25.0%	20.0%
Blue/Gold	72.7%	36.4%	54.5%	45.4%	36.4%
Sliding HP	62.5%	50.0%	50.0%	41.7%	33.3%
Sliding O-S	71.9%	50.0%	53.1%	46.7%	43.8%

Note: 2-week turnovers not counted as "on-station"

The on-station swapout option has the additional advantage over the homeport swapout plan of operating in modules of just 2 aircraft carriers and 3 crews/air wings. This allows more flexible scheduling in the face of overhaul delays as well as permitting surges during crises without a debilitating impact on the overall crew rotation flow.

This option enables 2 carriers and 3 crews/air wings to provide the current forward presence of 4 carriers and air wings. Accounting for overhauls and ship-life, just 9 carriers, 9 air wings, and 9 crews could match the current on-station time of 13 ships/crews and 12 air wings. This plan should be quickly adopted for the Nimitz Class ships on each coast.

Having discussed "how often" a carrier could be forward deployed given a range of new patterns, it is time to turn to the question of how best to use a flattop once it arrives.

CHAPTER IV

FORCE COMPOSITION

As with any military force, deciding what individual elements to include in a carrier battle group along with the carrier itself depends on just how you wish to use it. As the new Secretary of Defense Les Aspin stated in his confirmation hearings, "Our naval forces should be sized and shaped not only for armed conflict but also for the myriad of other important tasks we call upon them to do. Forward presence is certainly a key ingredient of this mix, along with such missions as peace-keeping, humanitarian assistance, deterrence and crisis control."[10]

As well as considering the non-traditional mission requirements of an interest-based strategy, shaping the composition of a CVBG must also consider the appropriate level of defense in view of near-term threats. The open ocean threat of coordinated Soviet air, surface, and subsurface attack is no longer an everyday worry. Routine deployments face only tactical air and limited surface and subsurface threats. The traditional mix of supporting combatants and aircraft for layered defense is wasteful overkill in today's glaring reality of scarce resources.

CVBG SURFACE COMBATANTS

Routine defensive needs of the CVBG now could be handled with a mix of 1 CV/CVN, 1 Aegis CG, 1 DDG, and 1 DD or FFG. Adding in a single dedicated combat logistics force (CLF) ship, this still frees up 2 or 3 surface combatants and another CLF hull for independent or coordinated use. More missions, more presence, and more water can be covered.

To some extent this concept is being tried. In the Sixth Fleet during 1991 and 1992, Vice Admiral Owens split off an Aegis cruiser, an escort, and an SSN from deploying CVBGs and teamed them with an alert P-3 aircraft and an E-3 AWACS to form a Maritime Action Group (MAG).[11] Though emphasizing the synergistic advantages of this split CVBG in the warfighting arena, Vice Admiral Owens does note that, "Using our assets flexibly can compensate for force reductions and, in some cases, may even generate more effective capabilities for specific missions."[12]

AIRCRAFT CARRIER LOADOUT

The mix of forces embarked on the carrier itself is also a candidate for innovative and constructive change. Optimized for the Cold War, the standard carrier air wing reflects an emphasis on fleet air defense and strike warfare. This leaves our capital ship woefully unprepared to carry out the new, non-traditional missions.

To be sure, power projection and warfighting must remain the primary mission of a carrier. However, "primary" mission does not equate to "most frequently assigned" mission. A balance must be struck that keeps a good deal of punch and parry aboard the carrier while also allowing it to fulfill the other roles to which it is or should be assigned.

A first step toward such a new carrier loadout was tried in early 1993. The USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) removed one F-14 squadron and its S-3 squadron, and embarked a 600-man Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) in their place.[13] They practiced missions such as a non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) and an air assault raid. While the lessons learned are still being studied, the on-scene commanders were positive about the exercise results.

This test was a perfect example of broadening the ship's mission flexibility by trading away some of its defensive capability. Other candidates as elements of a carrier loadout might include medical teams, Seabees, Army civil affairs detachments, SEAL platoons, and logistics helicopters. Such forces are useful in humanitarian assistance, nation building, disaster relief, security assistance, and goodwill port visits.

Carriers have not been utilized for such purposes in the past precisely because they could not perform them. It is to the argument of whether aircraft carriers should spend time on such tasks in the future that we now turn.

CHAPTER V

STATIONING AND USAGE

The new nature of presence must be kept firmly in mind when deciding how to use a deployed aircraft carrier. While the National Military Strategy notes the advantage that "Forward presence forces... are often the most responsive in cases of natural disaster or regional crisis"[14], forward presence should not be thought of as just preemptive crisis response.

Taken to such an extreme quite often in the past, our carriers were stationed reactively and not proactively. The CVBG was used as a big stick to threaten a troublemaker while ignoring the silent majority of countries that were trying to improve their lot. Such "coercive presence" should no longer limit our carriers, but must give way to periods of "conducive presence" as well, where strategic friendships are nurtured.

Again, steps are being taken by our leaders in the right direction. As the current CINCLANT noted, "Our carriers are tied no longer to traditional deployment hubs...".[15] This concept, known as "tethering", allows more freedom of motion for the CVBG. The leash should continue to be lengthened. Our carrier groups need to exert positive presence worldwide. Just what form might this proactive, positive, conducive presence take? Two areas that merit attention are port visits and military-to-military contacts.

GOODWILL PORT VISITS

At some point between the tour of the Great White Fleet and today, the distinction between a "port visit" and "liberty call" was lost. It is time to regain the flag waving focus of that former era.

We need to drop anchor with a plan. Preparation for a port call should not consist of reserving a block of tee times. The rebuilding of schools and orphanages should not be relegated to the chaplain and 20 volunteers. Instead, use the specialized elements advocated earlier, such as medical teams, Seabees, and civil affairs detachments, along with the general crew, to help and befriend the country visited. Leave the goodwill teams ashore for a few weeks when feasible, returning to reembark them after some other exercise in the region.

These new style port visits naturally should be at places not traditionally frequented by our carriers. Save Perth, Singapore, and the Riviera for occasional liberty, but we need to call on the towns and cities of Africa, South America, and Southern Asia as well. If we do not want to be the World's Policeman, we need to become the World's Part-Time Volunteer Social Worker.

MILITARY-TO-MILITARY CONTACTS

Establishing a close relationship with a foreign armed force goes far beyond enhancing interoperability should we be allied in a future conflict. The relationship may be a factor

in whether they become an ally at all. Furthermore, improving their professionalism through exercises or face-to-face training may aid political stability. Finally, contact with U.S. forces may help imbue some militaries with a credo like ours of apolitical subservience to civilian leadership, thus avoiding frequent coups and so enhancing democracy.

To that end, we should maximize military-to-military contacts. The same port visits just mentioned should include direct practical and classroom training provided by embarked Marine and SEAL forces, roundtable seminars and social gatherings for mid-grade officers, and small bilateral exercises when arriving and departing. The focus must be on serving their training needs, not on using their few ships and aircraft as skunks and bogies for our own training. If a carrier steams back over the horizon smug in its military superiority, our strategic interests will not be served. On the other hand, if the carrier departs and leaves behind personal friendships and professional respect, both nations will benefit.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Unified CINCs and the Chief of Naval Operations can no longer address domestic fiscal constraints and changing strategies for a multipolar world as separate issues. Diverse as those subjects might be, with few officers or academics well versed in both, they both are critical in determining the best peacetime employment of our aircraft carriers. These capable ships must adapt to better serve our national interests even as their number decreases.

Radical changes in deployment patterns are ideas whose time has come. The Nimitz Class carriers should operate under multiple crewing schemes, while the remainder of flattops need to adjust their deployment cycles. The traditional air wing should be cut back to allow room on board for other types of forces which can perform new, non-traditional missions. The supporting screen of surface combatants in the CVBG should be similarly reduced. The carrier battle group must be more actively involved in building positive relations throughout the world instead of being typecast as a threatening, coercive presence.

Only a fundamental change in the employment of our aircraft carriers will convince the Congress of their worth in this new post-Cold War strategic landscape. We truly must use them or lose them. As our new governing vision, ... From the Sea,

noted, "The challenge is much more complex than simply reducing our present naval forces. We must structure a fundamentally different naval force to respond to strategic demands, and that new force must be sufficiently flexible and powerful to satisfy enduring national security requirements."[16]

NOTES

1. Senate Armed Services Committee Report on the FY-1993 Defense Authorization Bill, S.Rept. 102-352 (Washington: 1992), p. 272.

2. Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Report on the Roles, Missions, and Functions of the Armed Forces of the United States (Washington: February, 1993), p. xxvii.

3. See for example D.F. Wood, "Going to WestPac Will be Different," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, February 1993, pp. 84-86.

4. This nominal cycle was cited on March 30, 1990 by Navy officials in briefing congressional analysts. It should be recognized that actual schedules are flexible. See Ronald O'Rourke, "Aircraft Carrier Force Levels and Deployment Patterns," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress 91-516F (Washington: June 28, 1991), pp. 3-4.

5. Ronald O'Rourke, "Naval Forward Deployments and the Size of the Navy," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress 92-803F (Washington: November 13, 1992), pp. 13-15.

6. Ronald O'Rourke, "Navy Nuclear-Powered Aircraft Carrier (CVN-76)," Congressional Research Service Issue Brief IB92042 (Washington: October 19, 1992), p. 9.

7. Ronald O'Rourke, "Aircraft Carrier Forward Homeporting," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress 92-744F (Washington: October 2, 1992), p. 5.

8. Senate Armed Services Committee Report on the FY-1993 Defense Authorization Bill, p. 271.

9. The sixth Nimitz class aircraft carrier was commissioned in 1992 and two more are in the pipeline. A reduction to 10 deployable carriers would mean that, by 1998, all but one of the CONUS-based carriers would be of this class. See Thomas W. Trotter, "The Future of Carrier Aviation," Naval War College Review, Winter 1993, pp. 22-44.

10. As reported by Rick Maze, "Aspin is Not Firm on Cutting to 340 Ships," Navy Times, February 1, 1993, p. 4:4-5.

11. Floyd D. Kennedy, Jr., "Diffusing Naval Power," National Defense, July/August 1992, pp. 34-35.

12. VADM William Owens, "Mediterranean Fleet: A Test-bed for Navy's Future," Armed Forces Journal International, July 1992, p. 33.

13. Chris Lawson, "The Corps Carrier Roosevelt," Navy Times, February 8, 1993, p. 22:2-4.

14. Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Military Strategy (Washington: January 1992), p. 14.

15. ADM Paul David Miller, "Doing the Job With a Smaller Fleet," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, April 1992, p. 56.

16. Secretary of the Navy, ... From the Sea: Preparing the Naval Service for the 21st Century, White Paper (Washington: September 1992), p. 2.

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